

P R E F A C E.

T Artary, and the North-East of China, being parts of Asia, the least known and hitherto the most fabulously described, I conceiv'd it would not be unpleasing to the Curious in England, to be furnisht with the Translation of two Letters published lately at Paris, which give a considerable Information concerning the present State of them. The Publisher Dedicated them to the French King, and affirms them to be the Letters of the Famous Father Verbieft, who is one of the 3 Fathers (viz. Ludovicus Buglius, Gabriel Magellanus, and Ferdinandus Verbieft) that were left at Pekin to Sollicit the cause of Christianity, and who by his great Skill in Mathematick Learning obtained access to that Emperour, and thereby many Favours for himself and the other Missionaries; As appears by a Book Printed in the Chinese and Latine Character in Quam Cheu the Metropolis of the Province of Quam tum in China Anno 1671.

But one Reason more of Printing this Translate was to manifest by Experience, the great use of Mathematical Knowledge, which, by these you will perceive highly esteemed in Countries where 'tis more difficult to be obtained than here, so that when no other means could procure entrance upon the skirts of that vast Empire of China, this alone has got admittance into the Metropolis of the whole Empire, nay, into the Palace and Presence of the Emperour, with the practical parts of which knowledge, you will here find Him delighted and even captivated; And that this Learned Father, judges it the most effectual means to insinuate into the Minds also, of the most rude and ignorant (of all other things and parts of the World, but what their own Country affords) in order to propagate the Christian Religion. I shall not now add as a Confirmation of this Opinion, what to this effect we have long since
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been informed of by the Historical Relations about China, but only take notice that besides this use, these Letters will give another, viz. Several Curious Mathematical and Physical Observations there made by the Author, who it seems well understood what would be beneficial to Europe as well as pleasing to the Chinese. To men so qualified with Mathematical knowledge, we owe the Discovery, of the before, unknown parts of the World, and from such we are to hope for the perfection of that knowledge, and the Discovery of the rest. I have upon this occasion added some inquiries concerning the Literature of that Country, they are but conjectures, grounded upon the perusal of some of their Books. A full Discovery is not pretended, however I hope they may serve as hints and incitements to others, who have better ability and other advantages to compleat it. We have hitherto not been admitted to the Skirts, but this Discovery when perfected, will lay open to us an Empire of Learning, hitherto only fabulously described; This will admit us to converse with the best and greatest of that Empire, that either are or ever have been; This will Discover a new Indian Mine and Treasure, and make a new trade to bring it hither, which may not be unworthy the consideration of our Honourable East-India-Company, As well as of several Learned Men, who have leisure, and other opportunities to make further Progress in this Inquiry; To promote which, if these find acceptance, I shall add some further observations, together with the publication of one piece of their Philosophy, which is printed in their own Character, with the pronunciation and interpretation in Latin; which may supply a fit Subject for the Curious to practice upon, and give a taste of the Philosophy and of the manner of Expression in that Remote Part of the World. To these I have added the figure of the Roman Abacus. Which questionless was the Ground of the signification of figures according to places. As also that of the Chinese in the Dictionary of the Court Language, differing from that of Martinius described in the first Decad of his Chinese History, 1st. in that the Dignity of the places here ascend from the Left to the Right; contrary to what he says of his; and 2ly. In that this has one head only for the fifth or 6th. And his hath two.